

The PRINCE of GRAUSTARK

By

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CHAPTER IX.

THE PRINCE MEETS MISS GUILÉ.

LATER on R. Schmidt sat alone in a sheltered corner of the promenade deck, where chairs had been secured by the forehanded Hobbs. The thin drizzle now aspired to something more definite in the shape of a steady down-pour, and the decks were almost deserted, save for the few who huddled in the unexposed nooks where the sweep and swish of the rain failed to penetrate. There was a faraway look in the young man's eyes, as of one who dreams pleasantly, with little effort but excellent effect. His pipe had gone out, so his dream must have been long and uninterrupted. Eight bells sounded, but what is time to a dreamer? Then came one bell and two, and now his eyes were closed.

Two women came and stood over him, but little did they suspect that his dream was of one of them: the one with the lovely eyes and the soft brown hair. They surveyed him, whispering, the one with a little perplexed frown on her brow, the other with distinct signs of annoyance in her face. The girl was not more than twenty, her companion quite old enough to be her mother: a considerate if not complimentary estimate, for a girl's mother may be either forty, fifty or even fifty-five, when you come to think of it.

They were looking for something. That was quite clear. And it was deplorably clear that whatever it was, R. Schmidt was sitting upon it. They saw that he was asleep, which made the search, if not the actual recovery, quite out of the question. The older woman was on the point of poking the sleeper with the toe of her shoe, being a matter-of-fact sort of person, when the girl imperatively shook her head and frowned upon the lady in a way to prove that even though she was old enough to be the mother of a girl of twenty, she was by no means the mother of this one.

AT THAT very instant R. Schmidt opened his eyes. It must have been a kindly poke by the god of sleep that aroused him so opportunely, but even so, the toe of a shoe could not have created a graver catastrophe than that which immediately befell him. He completely lost his head. If one had suddenly asked what had become of it, he couldn't have told, not for the life of him. For that matter, he couldn't have put his finger, so to speak, on any part of his person and proclaimed with confidence that it belonged to R. Schmidt of Vienna. He was looking directly up into a pair of appraising, startled eyes, in which there was a very pretty confusion and a far from impervious blink.

"I beg your pardon," said the older woman, without the faintest trace of embarrassment, — indeed, with some asperity, — "I think you are occupying one of our chairs."

He scrambled out of the steamer rug and came to his feet, blushing to the roots of his hair.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered, and found his awkwardness rewarded by an extremely sweet smile — in the eyes of the one he addressed.

"We were looking for a letter that I am quite sure was left in my chair," said she.

"A letter?" he murmured vaguely, and at once began to search with his eyes.

"From her father," volunteered the elderly one, as if it were a necessary bit of information. Then she jerked the rug away and three pairs of eyes examined the place where R. Schmidt had been reclining. "That's odd. Did you happen to see it when you sat down, sir?"

"I am confident that there was no letter —" began he, and then allowed his gaze to rest on the

"Yes," she said, quite pointedly. "In my room, Mr. Schmidt," and before he could get to his feet she was moving away



name-card at the top of the chair. "This happens to be my chair, madam," he went on, pointing to the card. "R. Schmidt." I am very sorry."

"The steward must have put that card there while you were at luncheon, dear. What right has he to sell our chairs over again? I shall report this to the Captain —"

"I am quite positive that this is my chair, sir," said the girl, a spot of red in each cheek. "It was engaged two days ago. I have been occupying it since — but it really doesn't matter. It has your name on it now, so I suppose I shall have to —"

"Not at all," he made haste to say. "It is yours. There has been some miserable mistake. These deck stewards are always messing things up. Still, it is rather a mystery about the letter. I assure you I saw no —"

"No doubt the steward who changed the cards had sufficient intelligence to remove all incriminating evidence," said she coolly. "We shall find it among the lost, strayed and stolen articles, no doubt. Pray retain the chair, Mr. —," she peered at the name-card — "Mr. Schmidt."

Her cool insolence succeeded in nettling a nature that was usually most gentle. He spoke with characteristic directness. "Thank you, I shall do so. We thereby manage to strike a fair average. I seize your deck chair, you seize my table. We are quits."

She smiled faintly. "R. Schmidt did not sound young and gentle, but old and hateful. That is why I seized the table. I expected to find R. Schmidt a

RETROSPECTIVE—Prince Robin of Graustark, traveling about the world, arrives in the Catskills to visit the Truxon Kings. W. W. Blithers, self-made multimillionaire and doting father of an only daughter, Maud, prematurely decides on the Prince as a son-in-law. He knows that Graustark is financially embarrassed as a result of the Balkan wars, and with the Blithers millions in mind he confides his domestic ambition to his wife. Blithers calls at the King villa and meets the Prince. He decides to lend Graustark \$16,000,000 and departs for New York to confer with Count Quinnox, the Graustark Minister of War. Meanwhile it is decided to give a ball at Blitherswood in honor of Prince Robin. Maud does not attend the ball, and Mr. Blithers, meeting the Prince the next day, apologizes and invites him to dinner and to be his son-in-law. Maud writes her parents that she and her former governess are going abroad, she under an assumed name, and expect to book passage on the Jupiter. Coincidentally Prince Robin plans his return to Graustark, and sails under the name R. Schmidt, to avoid publicity.

fat, old German with very bad manners. Instead, you were neither fat, old, nor disagreeable. You took it very nicely, Mr. Schmidt, and I am undone. Won't you permit me to restore your table to you?"

The elderly lady was tapping the deck with a most impatient foot. "Really my dear, we were quite within our rights in approaching the head waiter. He —"

"He said it was engaged," interrupted the young lady. "R. Schmidt was the name he gave, and I informed him it meant nothing to me. I am very sorry, Mr. Schmidt. I suppose it was all because I am so accustomed to having my own way."

"In that case, it is all very easy to understand," said he, "for I have always longed to be in a position where I could have my own way. I am sure that if I could have it, I would be a most overbearing, selfish person."

"We must inquire at the office for the letter, my dear, before —"

"It may have dropped behind the chair," said the girl.

"Right!" cried R. Schmidt, dragging the chair away and pointing in triumph at the missing letter. He stooped to recover the missive, but she was quick to forestall him. With a little gasp she pounced upon it and, like a child, proceeded to hold it behind her back. He stiffened. "I remember that you said it was from your father."

She hesitated an instant and then held it forth for his inspection, rather adroitly concealing the post-mark with her thumb. It was addressed to